

Testimony at Appropriation Committee Hearing Thursday, February 16, 2016

I am Carl Noll, and have spoken at this hearing for several years in the past advocating for mentally challenged people mainly because I have two mentally challenged sons of my own. Unfortunately, my verbal efforts before you have not met with much success, because our governor, or perhaps I should say our government, since all of you, our elected officials, are responsible for the fiscal plight that this state has found itself in for the last few years I have been, and am, a member of the Personal Care Assistant (PCA) Work Force Council, a committee created by a legislative act which addresses contract issues with these PCAs who are employed to support our challenged children. This committee is necessary because nothing had been done to address the pay scales of these PCAs until this committee was created a few years ago.

When I have spoken with individual members of our legislature about the issues regarding the mentally challenged, they always express their concern for our plight, but when voting time comes, the legislature always finds the way to vote for cuts which the Governor proposes and put our loved ones, in deeper and more serious plight than before. Our son Eric, a 49 year old autistic, receives day care funding thru DDS through a medicaid waiver. He has lived with us since he was born. We have no idea what will happen to him when we can no longer care for him. I assume his "happy life" will end when an agency seeks what is known as "an emergency placement" which can be anywhere a bed can be provided for him, thus removing him from any and everything important to him, His brother, Robert, has lived in a group home at Oak Hill, Connecticut Institute for the Blind. since he became blind at 5 years old. With the budget cutbacks proposed by the Governor both of their programs are placed in financial jeopardy.

Another critical situation involves people in need of services who are on the list known with rancor as the "waiting list". This list over 2,000 names (and growing) of clients who have no financial support at all. Recently, Governor Molloy and his Secretary of Office of Policy and Management (OPM), Benjamin Barnes, have indicated that they are going to take action to unfreeze this list. They made this statement while planning a budget which contains

provisions to cut one half a billion dollars in 2017. We are certainly interested in how this will come about. Or are they only saying what they think the advocates for these people want to hear. To recall an old Wendy's commercial.. WHERE'S THE BEEF?? Where is the money going to come from. Needless to say, I, and others, are skeptical.

Recently, the President of my alma mater, the University of Connecticut indicated that it won't be long before perspective UConn students, who meet admission requirements, but who don't have the financial means to afford it will be able to attend UConn for free. This brings up the issue of high functioning people receiving a college education for free while thousands of mentally disabled people who can't care for themselves will be provided with no services at all

Personally, I think it's time to bring Connecticut out of the dark ages that have been created by the fiscal and political turmoil of the last ten years. To me this should be introduced by a restructuring from the current non-partisan government to a totally bipartisan and progressive one starting at the executive branch..

It is obvious this one isn't working too well.

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